

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. *Applicant/Contact name and address:* Buffalo Mountain LLC, PO Box 4848, Whitefish, MT 59937
2. *Type of action:* Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit 30025385-76LJ
3. *Water source name:* Groundwater from two drilled wells.
4. *Location affected by action:* W2 of section 22 and the E2 E2 of section 21, all in T 28N, R 22W, Flathead County.
5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*
The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311, MCA are met. The applicant wishes to procure a water use permit for a 101 lot subdivision known as Buffalo Mountain. Water will be used for 101 homes and for 18.18 acres of lawns and gardens. Water will be pumped from two drilled wells at a combined rate of 120 gpm, 40 gpm from well #1 and 80 gpm from well #2. This will be a public water system monitored by the MT DEQ. A 224,000 gallon storage tank will be incorporated into the system.

*6Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction) MT DEQ, MT FW & P, Flathead County Planning office, MT Natural Heritage Program and the MT Historical Society.*

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity - Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

Determination: The source is groundwater from two deeply drilled wells.

Water quality - Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.

Determination: NA

Groundwater - Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.

Determination: Initial testing by the applicant's consultant found no impact to other groundwater in the area. These wells are too deep to have a measurable impact on surface water sources.

DIVERSION WORKS - Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.

Determination: The wells have already been drilled and tested.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species - Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."

Determination: Although a Lynx may pass through this area from time to time, the location should not be considered prime habitat. No barriers are planned which would prevent migration if a Lynx were to pass through the area.

Wetlands - Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.

Determination: NA

Ponds - For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.

Determination: NA

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.

Determination: Slight change is soil moisture due lawn & garden irrigation in season.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.

Determination: The homeowners will be responsible for the control of noxious weeds.

AIR QUALITY - Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.

Determination: NA

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.

Determination: No historic sites were identified on this property.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water, and energy not already addressed.

Determination: None were identified by this EA.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

Determination: This development is consistent with other like projects in Flathead County.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Determination: NA

HUMAN HEALTH - Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.

Determination: NA

PRIVATE PROPERTY - Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.

Yes___ No_X_. If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination:

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

Impacts on:

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? Potential for slight impacts.
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? Definite positive impacts to county tax revenues.
- (c) Existing land uses? Historically this land was used for livestock grazing on a seasonal basis. This development will discontinue historic uses.
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? None
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? Moderate changes if all 101 lots are built on.
- (f) Demands for government services? Some increases in demand.
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? None
- (h) Utilities? Some additional demands with the new housing and wells pumps.
- (i) Transportation? Due to the number of homes proposes, there will an increase in traffic on area roads.
- (j) Safety? Slight due to fire danger and increase in traffic load.
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? None identified.

2. Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population: *The secondary and cumulative impacts associated to this project will not be known for some time to come. The full impact may not be known for 20 to 30 years.*

3. Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures: *If objections are received during public notice, the developer may need to amend his plan and cut back on the number of lots associated to this action.*

4. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider: *The no action alternative would prevent this action from going forward. Possibly the applicant could scale back the number of lots to eliminate objections after the public notice stage of processing. Since no adverse impacts were seen during step down pump testing, the current application is the preferred alternative.*

PART III. Conclusion

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

Because no cumulative or significant impacts were identified by this EA, the EA will be the appropriate level of analysis for the action.

Name of person responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Wes McAlpin

Title: Water Resources Specialist

Date: April 24, 2007